



While in the area, you'll ride through some of the country's most fascinating history and geology. Twenty-seven million years ago, the largest volcanic eruption ever documented blew the country apart and formed the La Garita Caldera. This oblong void is 22 miles wide and 47 miles long. The outline of this giant caldera is hard to find, but evidence of its existence is all around you at Penitente. Fish Canyon tuff, the rock blown out by the explosion, forms the canyon walls.

The Penitente Canyon Special Recreation Management Area has many trails for mountain bikers to enjoy among twisty rock canyons and towering boulders. A newly reworked trail system offers seventeen miles of rides for all levels, from easy pedals to technical boulder jumping.



PENITENTE CANYON Special Recreation Management Area

Mountain Biking



San Luis Valley Field Office • Colorado



Humans have visited this area for thousands of years. From prehistoric groups to Utes and Jicarilla Apaches, people have added to the rich history here. Hispanic settlers used ox carts to haul wood from the mountains – you can still see the wagon ruts carved into the rocks along the Penitente Canyon Loop Trail. The area was named after the religious brotherhood Los Hermanos Penitentes, who worshipped in the vicinity years ago.

